etc magazine

City College of San Francisco | Fall 2019

PSYCHEDELIC THERAPY

Ancient remedies transcend their modern stigma

CONTENTS

Fall 2019

03 **A Well-Stocked Pantry**

City College's new Rams Market provides free food for students

07 **Fast-Casual vs. Old-World Charm**

What it takes for a restaurant to survive in a cut-throat culinary industry

15 **Even Better Than Hoop Dreams**

Basketball star Malcolm Johnson pivots towards new challenges

20 **Playing It Forward**

Alum mentors at-risk young adults at Sunset Youth Services

etc magazine

11 **Jimmie Fails Succeeds**

Creators of "The Last Black Man in San Francisco" reflect on their time at City College

24 **Psychedelic Therapy**

Recently decriminalized drugs find new life in mental health treatment

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Psilocybin mushrooms were classified as Schedule I drugs in 1970. Since their recent decriminalization in Oakland, advocates keep pushing for further legalization.

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About Etc Magazine:
Etc Magazine is an award-winning student publication. It is written, edited, photographed, illustrated, designed, produced and distributed by students enrolled in the Journalism program at City College of San Francisco.

The magazine is devoted to fair and objective reporting. We cover the important issues facing the college, its students, faculty, staff, administration and the surrounding community. Any opinions expressed in the publication represent the views of the students who authored them. Etc does not purport to represent the views of the school's administration. The magazine comes out twice a year—once in the spring and again in the fall.

Editor's Note

For the past year and a half, I've been incredibly lucky to help lead the process of publishing Etc magazine. As a staff, we have the privilege to cover City College stories in a way no one else does. When I started I was familiar with the brass tax of semicolons and commas, but knew zilch about running a magazine.

Each story has helped me get to know our diverse community more, and this issue is no different.

In the cover feature "Psychedelic Therapy," Daniel Murphy reports on how psilocybin mushrooms — yes, the same ones your friend tripped on in the woods last week — can be used as a tool to help treat depression and anxiety.

Since my last piece on food insecurity for the fall 2018 issue, City College has installed the long-awaited Rams Market. In "A Well-Stocked Pantry," I follow up on how this new on-campus resource helps nourish students like mother-of-three Moon Ong and Rams Market volunteer Juan Renteria.

Meyer Gorelick tells the tale of standout City College basketball player Malcolm Johnson who forgoes a Division I scholarship and shot at the pros for an altogether different path in "Even Better than Hoop Dreams."

Hiya Swanhuyser's profile on "The Last Black Man in San Francisco" reveals how a breakout film likely up for an Oscar in January counts its director, lead actor and title character muse as City College alums.

Matthew Cardoza's story "Fast-Casual vs. Old-World Charm" explains how San Francisco restaurants, old and new, must evolve to survive in a high-rent city whose business owners feel the crunch as much as its residential tenants.

In "Playing It Forward," Lauren Walker-López explores how digital arts lead and mentor Miguel "Fego" Navarro at Sunset Youth Services uses collaborations in a recording booth to better serve at-risk youth. As someone who works next door to SYS in the Outer Sunset, it's been a pleasure getting to know the talented musicians who are my neighbors.

Through editing these stories and those in previous issues, I've come out the better. I've learned to ban the Oxford comma when following the Associated Press style (even though I secretly love that forbidden punctuation mark), to structure a jumble of paragraphs into a proper narrative and, most of all, that a publication is only as good as the people who make it. Our rotating host of writers, photographers, editors, designers, copy editors and illustrators is why Etc has been lauded for its award-winning journalism since its first issue in the fall of 2005.

It would be disingenuous to say we students did this alone. At the bottom of the Etc masthead, our adviser Jessica Lifland is the chess master who breaks down the logistics week to week so we all feel the hustle to make our deadlines and get the damn issue to the printer. I'm grateful that Jessica's been there to fix the problems that leave me stumped.

After three issues, perhaps now I can say I understand what it takes to transform a Google document of story pitches into a 32-page spread on glossy paper. A feeling in my gut says I still have more to learn. Perhaps the single gray hair on my forehead counts as my lasting souvenir.

Emily Huston, Editor in Chief

Volunteer Danxia Huang, right, picks out a sweet potato while Amy Coffey, management assistant of student activities, left, finishes arranging the produce before the 9 a.m. Rams Market start time. Volunteers like Huang get first pick of the free food before opening the market to a line of waiting students.

A WELL-STOCKED PANTRY

City College's new Rams Market provides free food for students

Story and Photos by Emily Huston

Early on a sunny Tuesday morning at the Wellness Center Amphitheater, volunteer Tony Frazier bellows until his voice runs hoarse, "FREE FOOD! Free, healthy food!"

For the 40% of City College of San Francisco students who are food insecure, healthy food isn't easy to come by.

The City College Food Pantry Work Group, who initially studied food insecurity on campus, has worked to change that. In February 2018, a dedicated group of faculty, staff and teachers started a food shelves pilot program offering free snacks to hungry students. As described in the Fall 2018 issue of Etc magazine, the food shelves offer students up to two snacks per day.

But the packets of oatmeal and ramen weren't enough. Since its formation, the work group campaigned for a bonafide food pantry.

Every Tuesday, students in the know queue up half an hour early for a 9 a.m. opening. An apple-red awning shelters the tables that groan under the weight of boxes of Cheerios, bags of pita chips, buckets of plums, jars of peanut butter and sacks of apples. A steady stream of students descend the stairs into the plaza, then climb back up heaving cardboard boxes stacked with food.

"The pantry's gonna help me get through this week. It's gonna help a lot," says custodial services student Diana Linares, as she sits next to the market with her haul.

In January, City College introduced the long-awaited Rams Market in partnership with the San Francisco-Marin Food Bank, offering free fruits, vegetables and pantry staples to any registered student. Since opening in the spring 2019 semester, it serves upwards of 190 students each week.

Nutrition teacher and market volunteer Jonathan Siekmann says, the Rams Market is "for everybody, for all students."

Food insecurity is a national problem among college students, according to the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice's 2019 report surveying nearly 86,000 students from two- and four-year colleges across the country. The authors found that nearly half of respondents were food insecure, meaning they had "limited or

uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe food." The most extreme form of food insecurity can result in losing weight, experiencing hunger pangs and regularly skipping meals.

For hungry students faced with a long day of classes, the Rams Market can provide lasting relief.

> "Depending on what you eat, it could last you all day long. I eat a nice bowl of oats and it's like I'm superman. I'm on it!"
>
> – Ken Young

"If you go (to the food shelves), you're still hungry," says sociology student and market volunteer Juan Ernesto Renteria. "But now with the Rams Market, they give you food for the whole week… You have something to eat at home."

"I tell anyone every time I can about the market," he says, estimating that it saves students at least $40 a week in grocery bills.

"If I have three or four containers of tuna (from the Market), I'll make a tuna salad with onion. I chop the onion. I add olives. I add some tomato, maybe celery, a little mayo, a pinch of salt, and tostadas and I chop a little jalapeño," Renteria says. "It gives it a spice. I have a nice meal for the afternoon."

Students' families benefit from the Rams Market too. Yingyi Ye, a student who splits her week studying ESL and medical assisting picks up fresh apples, oranges, bananas and other fruits for her two children.

Some of the healthier options available at the market might not appeal to children. "The vegetables... ehhhh they're picky. We have to force them," says Linares, who's a mother of four.

Linares typically makes soups from the produce. "Sometimes we're like, 'No, you have to eat this because this is the only thing we have. Right now we're broke,'" she says.

The weekly program ensures Linares can access fresh produce for her children. "It lets them eat for at least the next two days, tops three," she adds.

Renteria agrees. He takes home the market's produce for soup and salad, "Those little containers for jam? I skip those. I skip the cereal. I avoid the chips. I'd rather get more vegetables, the healthy stuff."

To help students rushing off to 9 a.m. classes, the volunteers usually start serving around 8:45 a.m. or earlier. The market stays open until 10:30 a.m. or until the food runs out.

The popularity of the new Rams Market means latecomers might not be left with much choice. Ye says she often misses the good stuff after having to drop off her two kids at school.

Student Moon Ong, who studies child development, uses the Rams Market every week to help feed her family of four. She recently arrived only 20 minutes after opening and texted her friend, "You don't have to come. There's nothing left." Only a few heads of celery and bags of potato sticks remained.

Amy Coffey, management assistant of student activities and director of the Rams Market, explains that the market's food allotment from the San Francisco-Marin Food Bank depends on how many students signed in for food the previous week.

For some students there isn't enough time to visit the market. Valeria Trujillo, a second-year student taking general education classes, has only been to the Rams Market once because she works 80-90 hours per week, including Tuesday mornings when the market is open.

On a typical day Trujillo powers through three shifts, leaving only one day for classes each week. Whether she's working as a cannabis delivery driver with Eaze, tossing pizzas at DNA Pizza, or showing open houses for Rentals in SF, Trujillo struggles to find time for a healthy meal.

"When you have limited time available, it's nice to have a place to take care of yourself," Trujillo says of the Rams Market. "What we eat affects how we work."

Although grappling with its growing popularity, the Rams Market's existence is a hard-fought victory. The work group organized for years to establish a food pantry and food shelves on campus.

Due to the success of the Ocean Campus food shelves last year, City College expanded the pilot program to five centers this fall semester. Shelves at Civic Center, John Adams, Chinatown, Downtown and Mission Centers now join the six existing at Ocean Campus. Southeast and Fort Mason were not included due to those centers' smaller student populations.

"We went with the ones where we could really maximize the impact for students," Coffey says. "I would love to roll them out everywhere. That's my long term plan."

Above: Rams Market volunteers serve fresh produce and packaged goods to over 180 students each week. Right: Students wait to receive their portion of fresh vegetables at the weekly Rams Market.

RUFFLES
Lay's
Fritos
Stacy's
ROLD GOLD
Cheetos
Frito Lay

Stephanie Rivera, a second-year child development student, leaves the Rams Market with a box full of groceries for the coming week.

Coffey also hopes to add on-campus student food storage facilities where students can store their groceries during class. She's also open to changing the market start time to accommodate more students' schedules.

For students to thrive, access to healthy food makes a difference. The market and food shelves serve as vital resources for students who strive for a better academic future.

Since last interviewed in the fall 2018 issue of Etc, computer networking and information technology student Ken Young, who is working towards a doctorate in psychology, still regularly pops by the food shelves before class to grab a granola bar, Fig Newton or protein-rich beef jerky stick.

"Depending on what you eat, it could last you all day long. I eat a nice bowl of oats and it's like I'm superman. I'm on it!" Young says, laughing.

National studies show students who experience food insecurity suffer academically. According to the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, food-insecure students report grades of C or below at a higher rate. What's worse, the study also found that only 20% of food-insecure students in higher education take advantage of public food benefits like food stamps.

College food pantries can pick up the slack. Although no studies exist on the Rams Market's academic impact on City College students, access to healthy food is the foundation to any learner's success.

As Young says, "It's better to have something than nothing. City (College) is that something. We all need it. We all have to learn. We all have to eat food. We all need to be healthy."

Students like Young go to college to pursue the promise of a life made better through education. The Rams Market helps ease the stress of putting enough food on the table, allowing students to focus on their dreams instead of how to pay for the next batch of groceries.

At his brother's home, Rams Market volunteer Juan Renteria dices an onion for a tuna salad using food from the market.

Barista Drew Katigbak, front, stocks pastries while co-worker Sema Sanchez, back, brews coffee at Excelsior Coffee. (Matthew Cardoza/Etc Magazine)

FAST-CASUAL *VS.* *Old-World Charm*

What it takes for a restaurant to survive in a cut-throat culinary industry

Story by Matthew Cardoza

Excelsior Coffee hums on a Sunday morning. Two baristas, Sema Sanchez and Drew Katigbak, prepare drinks for a crowd of young customers chatting, eagerly anticipating their morning coffee fix.

Excelsior Coffee has only been open since June 2019, but owners Lea and Andre Sabado spent two years renovating the shop.

The pair financed the endeavor by replacing their vintage cars and motorcycles with an espresso machine. The space Excelsior Coffee occupies has its own history. "It was an underground gambling den, then they got evicted, and the space was empty for a year-and-a-half before we took over the lease," Lea Sabado says.

She did have some fears before opening the store with her husband — the biggest being a bad reception from the neighborhood. With a hefty business loan and personal savings on the line, the small business had little margin for error.

"While I still see San Francisco as an incubator for new chefs to gain experience, I definitely tell my students about the difficulty of starting a restaurant here. It's crazy hard."

– Vince Paratore

Mixt replaced the 46-year-old Mexican Restaurant La Rondalla and adapted the iconic sign to fit their modern style. (Amal Ben Ghanem/Etc Magazine)

Brick-and-mortar storefronts like Excelsior Coffee must keep up or shutter up. Between expensive retail rents, high wages and increased food costs, profits in food service can be narrow.

"While I still see San Francisco as an incubator for new chefs to gain experience, I definitely tell my students about the difficulty of starting a restaurant here. It's crazy hard," says Vince Paratore, a City College of San Francisco restaurant management instructor.

Turnover in the restaurant industry has always been notoriously high, particularly in cities like San Francisco, where retail rents are constantly rising. Commercial retail rent in San Francisco increased 16% from 2012 to 2017, according to real estate data company CoStar.

Labor costs are high too. San Francisco's 2019 minimum wage hike to $15.59 per hour is considerably higher than most cities across the state, which average $12 per hour, according to the nonprofit Economic Policy Institute. Such a high minimum wage particularly hurts struggling restaurant owners with already thin margins.

"A restaurant in San Francisco can get employees — the trouble is hanging on to them. Labor cost and housing cost is driving them away and really stressing the industry," Paratore says.

Inflation, international tariffs and other market fluctuations have significantly increased food costs in San Francisco. In addition, customers have come to expect artisanal, organic and higher quality ingredients when dining out.

A recent decrease in immigrant and domestic agriculture laborers has forced farm-owners to harvest crops that are less labor intensive. Farmers are implementing more automation to their production, a California Farm Bureau Federation survey says. The price for labor-intensive crops, like avocados, has risen significantly.

The owners of Excelsior Coffee, the Sabados, keep food costs down by offering a consistent, select menu made with affordable ingredients. "We are definitely strategic," Lea Sabado says, referring to many items on the menu priced under $5.

At Souvla, on Valencia Street, wafts of rotisserie chicken float out onto the street enticing potential customers. Souvla offers Greek food in a sleek, modern setting with free Wi-Fi. The local chain boasts four locations and a corporate office in San Francisco.

Souvla is considered "fast-casual," which is loosely defined as counter service ordering but with higher quality dishes than your typical fast food joint. Eateries like Souvla have a small wait staff who attend to customers after ordering, but some fast-casual spots offer no wait service at all.

At Mixt, a build-your-own-salad format restaurant on Valencia Street, customers select from an assortment of fixings and have their food prepared behind a glass counter by an employee. When the food is ready, a cashier finishes the transaction.

The Melt, a grilled cheese eatery founded in San Francisco, has both a self order

Head chef Ophelia Lopez flambés a sauce while grilling fish on a busy Saturday night. Lopez has worked at Villa d'Este for over 40 years. (Matthew Cardoza/Etc Magazine)

Villa d'Este restaurant owner Ramon Oropeza waits for orders to bring out to customers on a busy Saturday night. (Amal Ben Ghanem/Etc Magazine)

kiosk and cash registers. It was one of the first companies to implement smartphone ordering and pickup, according to SF Gate.

For fast-casual restaurants like Souvla, Mixt and The Melt, much of the business is delivery and takeout, which requires minimal labor beyond food preparation.

Souvla, Mixt and The Melt are all organized as small corporations, meaning they have stronger financial backing through outside investments. A slow day at Mixt on Valencia can be offset by good earnings at the Mixt location in the Financial District. Conversely, a slow day for a mom-and-pop restaurant can be far more damaging.

At longtime Lakeside neighborhood restaurant, Villa d'Este, owner Ramon Oropeza is acutely aware of this. "You need to save for the very slow days," he says.

Villa d'Este is a charming traditional Italian restaurant owned and run by Oropeza since 1978. Since Oropeza owns the building, he doesn't have to worry about rent increases.

Waitress Yannee Buorn, a City College student who has worked there for five years, describes it as "a hidden gem."

Oropeza, who calls himself a "do-it-yourself" manager, vacuums the burgundy rug in the dining room, cleaning up from the previous night.

He offers advice to other restaurant owners, pointing out, "You need to be willing to learn as you go, and above all you really need experience to survive."

Oropeza has a solid, older customer base, but he wants to draw more people into Villa d'Este. He is looking to expand the restaurant's social media presence.

The Sabados appreciate the loyal clientele they've garnered since they opened less than a year ago. Lea Sabado attributes the coffee shop's early success to neighborhood support.

She attributes this to "a lot of outreach," which she hopes will be worth it in the long run since she envisions Excelsior Coffee as a long-term investment in the neighborhood. Not only do the Sabados own a business in the Excelsior District — they live there too.

Customer Leo Bulatao sports an Excelsior Coffee sweatshirt emblazoned with a lightning logo as he sips

Excelsior Coffee shop owner Lea Sabado stands by their official lightning bolt logo. She and her husband Andre Sabado sold some of their vintage cars and motorcycles to finance their business. (Amal Ben Ghanem/Etc Magazine)

his coffee and enjoys a croissant sandwich. "It's a great place that serves great coffee and pastries, that's locally owned by people who've grown up in this neighborhood like I did," he says.

Excelsior Coffee takes its name from both the neighborhood and the owners' favorite motorcycle brand. One of their many motorcycles is perched above a door frame with a large yellow neon lightning bolt, their logo, near the entrance.

"Executing a logo… and making it appealing helps to bring in customers," Lea Sabado says. She also believes it is a must to pay special attention to curating their social media. She struggles to find time for social media marketing, "but spending the time and money... benefits you in the long run," she says.

Excelsior Coffee may be doing well in the current climate, but restaurants like Villa d'Este, once plentiful, are now a rarity. Edgar Torres, a professor of Latin American studies at City College, says he misses some of the old Mission District mainstays like La Rondalla, a popular Mexican restaurant with a bright red facade and an iconic, if not historic, neon sign hanging out front. La Rondalla was open for decades and had a cult-like following. Live mariachi bands would parade from table to table, creating a party-like atmosphere.

> San Francisco's high minimum wage particularly hurts struggling restaurant owners with already thin margins.

Originally opened in 1951 by Carlos and Esperanza Barrios, La Rondalla was passed to their son Carlos Cruz Barrios, and then to Cruz Barrios' daughters Luna and Betty Barrios. It stayed open for 46 years before closing quietly in July 2016 due to legal complications. A message left on the door read, "We are closing – God bless you. P.S. We love you all."

Mixt, the fast-casual salad chain, took over the space after La Rondalla closed, adding a ninth location. La Rondalla's once bright red exterior and neon sign is now grey with a painted sign that says, "SF grown/Mission driven." The restaurant's decor is minimal, with shiny white walls and simple wooden tables.

Whether it's a cafe hangout, traditional restaurant dining or the thriving fast-casual scene, owners and managers must get creative to succeed.

Using a combination of strategies like creating a welcoming atmosphere, cutting costs and employing clever marketing tactics, these small businesses work smart to survive. The food won't change, but the way customers dine out will.

The singing group Cabaret Music! performs during the monthly supper club at Villa d'Este. At right, pianist David Miotke and bassist Steve Hanson provide musical accompaniment. (Amal Ben Ghanem/Etc Magazine)

Jonathan Majors, left, as Montgomery Allen and Jimmie Fails, right, as Jimmie Fails in "The Last Black Man in San Francisco." (Peter Prato/A24)

JIMMIE FAILS SUCCEEDS

Creators of "The Last Black Man in San Francisco" reflect on their time at City College

Story by Hiya Swanhuyser

"The Last Black Man in San Francisco" thrilled the nation with its release in early 2019. The independent feature film won awards at Sundance, grossed over $4 million and earned a 93% rating on review-aggregator Rotten Tomatoes.

Director and co-writer Joe Talbot, a City College of San Francisco alum, has created "a wistful lament and a heart-breaking elegy. It's a tribute to the notion of home that we all carry," according to a review by Odie Henderson on the website rogerebert.com. Set spectacularly in San Francisco, the film especially bewitched Bay Area viewers.

Talbot has produced a world-class work of art that plays with autobiographical reality and lyrical fiction. His childhood friend and co-creator Jimmie Fails stars in the film, and story developer Prentice Sanders serves as a character muse. Some of their pride can be shared around campus: all three are City College alumni, as are many of the cast and crew members.

"Had I never gone to City, I probably never would have had that inspiration, and I don't even know if I would have made the movie," Talbot says.

Standing outside the Mission District's Roxie Theater wearing his signature ball cap, he reflects on the cinema department course he took in 2015 with instructor John Carlson, saying "City meant a lot to me."

"He was teaching us film, shooting on film, and I was really interested in it. And John of course is wonderful, and he has all these stories about, like, the time he saw (Academy Award-winning director) Terry Zwigoff in the McDonald's on Bayshore when (Zwigoff) was struggling through the edit of 'Crumb,'" Talbot says.

City College as an institution stands tall in Talbot's mind. Not only was it the place he and Fails began to find a film community, but he believes the school is also integral to the city itself.

"It's a really important part of San Francisco — to be able to have access to great teachers, and potential collaborators, and in my case, not to have to spend tens of thousands of dollars like you do at film schools, which I couldn't afford. I think it's a wonderful resource," Talbot says.

> "In cutting those classes (Chancellor Mark Rocha) is essentially preventing the next Last Black Man in San Francisco from getting made."
>
> – Joe Talbot

Something else happened in John Carlson's course: Talbot made a friend, and they bonded over offbeat movies and rap music.

"Prentice Sanders was in the class, and he was one of the more interesting people I'd ever met. At that point I had been thinking a little bit about 'The Last Black Man,' but there was no friendship character."

When he met Sanders, he says, "I started imagining what it would be like to see this fictionalized friendship onscreen between a character like him and Jimmie, and so he really inspired the character of Montgomery."

From then on the film's narrative embraced Sanders "as sort of the guiding light for that character, because he was just such a cool, interesting, wonderful, unique Bay Arean," Talbot recalls.

Above: Director Joe Talbot, center, chats with movie-goers outside of the Roxie Theater. At right is Prentice Sanders, the muse for Talbot's character, Mont. Left: Jonathan Majors, left, and Jimmie Fails, right, grace the screen at an outdoor showing of "The Last Black Man in San Francisco" as part of the PROXY Fall Film Fest. (Yujin Lim/Etc Magazine)

The film uses the two characters' friendship as a counterbalance to larger realities, including the alarming rate at which African American communities continue to disappear from San Francisco.

San Francisco's African American population dropped from 78,931 (10.9%) in 1990 to 48,870 (6.1%) in 2010, according to the San Francisco Planning Department's African American Citywide Historic Context Statement, released in 2016. The loss continues. The American Community Survey estimates that the population declines by two thousand African American residents every year.

The film, however, draws on its creators' deep Bay Area roots — Talbot is the son of prolific writer and extraordinary local historian David Talbot, while Sanders is the grandson of Prentice Earl Sanders, the first African American police chief of San Francisco.

Instead of dwelling on the loss within the community, the film offers optimism, embodying the famous words of another important local, Harvey Milk:"You've got to give them hope."

At an outdoor screening near Patricia's Green in Hayes Valley on a warm October evening, Jimmie Fails holds down a barstool across the street from the massive movie screen. He can see the upturned faces of the audience through the large open window.

Most of the time, though, he's fielding a constant stream of fans. Stranger after stranger wants to shake his hand and tell him the same thing: "Thank you. Thank you for making this beautiful film."

Fails, the star, inspiration and co-creator of the film, says his time at City College helped get him where he is — feeling more or less on top of the world. He hopes to act more, which seems inevitable, and he's spent the last few months globetrotting with some of his best friends. Thinking back to his early college years of English and acting classes and hanging around campus, Fails remembers: "Cool people, cool teachers!"

Like so many students, he spent time figuring out what he wanted to do with his life, feeling unfocused. "Don't be me," Fails advises students today. "If you sign up for it, do it, whatever it is you want to do. Just follow through." He may not have followed through back then, but his brilliant smile now looks like the expression of a man who's worked hard and has been recognized.

Fails says that although he appears onscreen only in background cameos, Prentice Sanders contributed to the work of the film, back in those campus days.

"We were just people who clicked," Sanders says of his relationship with Fails.

Sanders sits at Philz Coffee on 24th Street, explaining his connection with the cast and crew of the film. It isn't a completely obvious one, but the connection remains strong. The 26-year-old speaks softly and quickly, and his long dark hair frames wide eyes that seem to see everything.

Talbot knew, back in 2015, that he wanted to make a film about Fails' family history. In between discussing cult films like John Waters' "Pink Flamingos" or Quentin Tarantino's "Pulp Fiction," Sanders says the three of them began to think it through.

"Joe would say 'Oh, I had this idea for a movie I want to make, it's about my friend, Jimmie. He skateboards, he knows everybody. He's just a kind of interesting guy.' I don't think he had a clear idea of it, like maybe it's vignettes, maybe it's anything. But we would just sit and talk about it," Sanders says.

> Stranger after stranger wants to shake Jimmie Fails' hand and tell him the same thing: "Thank you. Thank you for making this beautiful film."

Talbot may have enrolled in only a single film class at City College, and Fails, none, but Sanders has done the opposite.

"I've taken all of them!" Sanders says. He considers the cinema department to be a valuable resource offering more, possibly, than more expensive institutions.

"I feel really lucky," he says.

Anjali Sundaram, a full-time faculty member in film production at the City College cinema department, says she hopes to help students build on the film's success, but she harbors concerns.

"A student will now have a harder time getting into classes, and a harder time being able to take the classes they want to take, and they'll have fewer choices," she says.

Discussing "The Last Black Man in San Francisco" in terms of how students today might follow in its creators' footsteps, Department Chair Denah Johnston says one fact is immediately and painfully clear: the Cinema department has suffered a 53% reduction of on-site courses in the fall 2019 semester which, she says, "has devastated the production class offerings."

Students, unsurprisingly, are extremely excited about "The Last Black Man in San Francisco." Some of the questions Sundaram asked her students when the fall semester began were: "What have you seen lately? What did you like? What's been happening? And they all said, "'The Last Black Man"! It's so great!' I think it's very personal for them."

"The issues around representation and character… of gentrification… highlight the fact that our cinema department is a place for anyone who's interested in visual storytelling to get their hands on equipment in the very first class," Sundaram says.

The reductions make it hard to offer all the required courses a student might need, but "We have created new curriculum that are smaller groupings of courses that should provide students with skill sets," Johnston explains. The courses will center on craft certificates of achievement and launch in the spring.

Hearing about City College's intense course cuts for the first time, Joe Talbot's usual easygoing manner turns to concern. The smile disappears.

Noting that there were fewer than the new minimum of 20 students in the cinema class he and Sanders took together, he says that "within that small group, there was some incredible talent that was obviously deeply inspiring to us. In cutting those classes, (Chancellor Mark Rocha) is essentially preventing the next Last Black Man in San Francisco from getting made."

At another recent local screening of "The Last Black Man in San Francisco," Talbot says during the audience Q&A that although the film's final moments highlight a fantastic image of Jimmie Fails, he is not the man referenced in the title.

Instead, Talbot points out, "Mont is the last black man in San Francisco. I hope everybody got that."

In a way, then, Prentice Sanders is the real last black man in San Francisco, still here, still observing, still creating. The film's message, at least in part, is a hope that San Franciscans, and people in general, can be less racist and see one another's humanity more vividly.

Sanders' message for City College students goes right along with the film's. "Be willing to be a part of the community of City College," he says. "Talk to the people who are in your classes."

Prentice Sanders walks to the Rosenberg Library on Ocean Campus before his evening class. The character Mont is based on Sanders. (Yujin Lim/Etc Magazine)

EVEN BETTER THAN HOOP DREAMS

Above: Michael Johnson, center, bids farewell to his family including grandsons Nash and Knox Johnson, son Malcolm Johnson, left, and Malcolm's girlfriend Laura Dellinger, right. They all live at Michael Johnson's home in Fairfield, Calif. (Janeth R. Sanchez/Etc Magazine)
Previous page: Malcolm Johnson explodes past Noah Haynesworth during a game between City College and Skyline College. (Eric Sun/special to Etc Magazine)

Basketball star Malcolm Johnson pivots towards new challenges

Story by Meyer Gorelick

Malcolm Johnson sits in the locker room before the 2018 California State Basketball Championship. His coach's words resonate in his head: "Play 110 percent. Move on from mistakes, and play for each other." Feeling free and energized, Johnson is ready.

The game goes sideways. A barrage of fouls slows the pace, but Johnson and his City College of San Francisco teammates regroup and rally. When the final

buzzer blares, the Rams lose, but it is a defeat that Johnson remembers fondly because his team played with heart.

When Johnson looks back on his City College basketball career, it's not the moments of individual brilliance that stand out to him, it's what his team achieved.

Johnson led the City College men's basketball team to a second place finish in the 2018 state championship and earned a full Division I athletic scholarship to the University of California, Davis. Johnson's identity seemed clear. He was a basketball player, strong student and new father.

Johnson grew up in Bakersfield, Calif., the third youngest of 10 siblings in a close family. "We bumped heads sometimes, but I wouldn't change it for the world," he says. He admires his parents, who've helped support, inform and shape every decision he makes.

His father, Michael Johnson, played Division II basketball at the University of Anchorage in Alaska, earning All-American honors. His mother, Cheryl Johnson, worked her way through a nursing program while Malcolm Johnson was in school. After a 6-inch growth spurt, he started playing basketball in the seventh grade.

In his senior year at Centennial High School, ESPN ranked Johnson the 69th best player in California, and he accepted a scholarship to play Division II college basketball at California State, Dominguez Hills in Los Angeles.

He redshirted his freshman season, meaning he chose to sit out official competitions while still training with the team. Although he had dominated the court in high school, he didn't feel prepared for college competition. "I was trash, I sucked," Johnson says, laughing. His calculated decision paid dividends in his sophomore year. Better prepared, Johnson earned All-Conference that season.

During Johnson's ascent, tragedy struck. His half brother, Brandon Robinson, was convicted on 15 counts related to three separate sexual assaults and sentenced to life in prison without parole.

"Anytime something like that happens to someone you're close with, it has a profound impact on you. I know that they were very close," Johnson's high school coach and mentor Hernan Santiago says.

Johnson became a target for media attention because he was a high-profile athlete with a brother in trouble. He remembers reporters calling. He felt they tried to exploit his family's misfortune and that they claimed his brother, Robinson, was guilty before due process. "It's a sensitive subject for me, and I just don't like to talk about it," he says.

Johnson's silence speaks volumes. According to his father, Johnson's reluctance to discuss his brother shows how the trauma has affected him.

The whole family felt the pressure. "It tore us apart. It ripped through my marriage and had a lot to do with my divorce," Michael Johnson, Malcolm's father says.

Robinson was the best athlete in the family. "Out of all the kids, (Robinson) was the one that had it. He was a basketball player; he was a football star," Michael Johnson says.

During this storm, Johnson considered his future and was inspired by his mother's nursing career. Unfortunately there was no nursing program at CSU Dominguez Hills. Johnson thought, "I don't know what to do after this. I do know that I need to get started on nursing."

As Johnson was in the crossroads of a decision, his girlfriend Lauren Dellinger became pregnant with their first child.

With a son on the way, Johnson left CSU Dominguez Hills after finishing the semester. He and Dellinger moved to Fairfield, Calif. to live with Johnson's father.

Enter, City College Head Basketball Coach Justin Labagh. Johnson's high school coach Santiago reached out to Labagh to alert him that Johnson was in the Bay Area and may want to play at City College. Labagh approached Johnson and left the ball in his court.

Johnson was on the fence. He wanted what was best for his new family. His father convinced him to stick with it. "I didn't think he was done yet," Michael Johnson says.

A close friend and high school teammate Alec Check was transferring to play at City College. Johnson chose to join his friend and brave the commute to San Francisco to play.

That fall, just as the basketball season began, Johnson received a full-ride scholarship to play for the UC Davis Aggies.

His father and Santiago thought Johnson had the potential to play professionally. But Johnson wasn't sure if he was ready to commit to playing basketball in a Division I program. He knew it would be a full-time job, leaving little to no time to spend with his new family.

In May 2019, before the start of UC Davis' summer training, Johnson made a decision. Following in his mother's

Malcolm Johnson holds his newborn son Knox Johnson while he sits at the dining room table, which doubles as a makeshift desk. He's chosen to forgo an athletic scholarship at UC Davis in order to pursue a nursing degree and spend time with his family. (Janeth R. Sanchez/Etc Magazine)

footsteps, he began to research nursing programs. UC Davis didn't have an undergraduate nursing program and Johnson wanted to stay close to his family. He found a fit at nearby Napa Valley College.

He knew that to succeed in nursing, he would have to devote all his time to academics and any remaining time would be spent in his new role as a father. There was no more time for basketball.

"I could see how from the outside it didn't look good," Johnson says about his decision to pass on a full-ride scholarship, "but everyone that was inside my circle either said that it was a good decision, or that they trust me."

For Johnson, the choice was easy: "I was OK with not playing basketball anymore. It wasn't that big of a deal to me."

Johnson's change of heart was especially hard on his father. "It killed me a little," Michael Johnson says. "Basketball brought me out of poverty and got me a free education." As a child, he had walked to school in East Oakland with holes in his shoes and had to make do with lean meals of rice and beans.

Michael Johnson worried for his son, but didn't want him to know it. "I was looking forward to going to UC Davis, bringing my friends, and sitting in the bleachers and supporting him.

> But Johnson wasn't sure if he was ready to commit to playing basketball in a Division I program. He knew it would be a full-time job, leaving little to no time to spend with his new family.

It was hard to take because of my love for the game," Michael Johnson says.

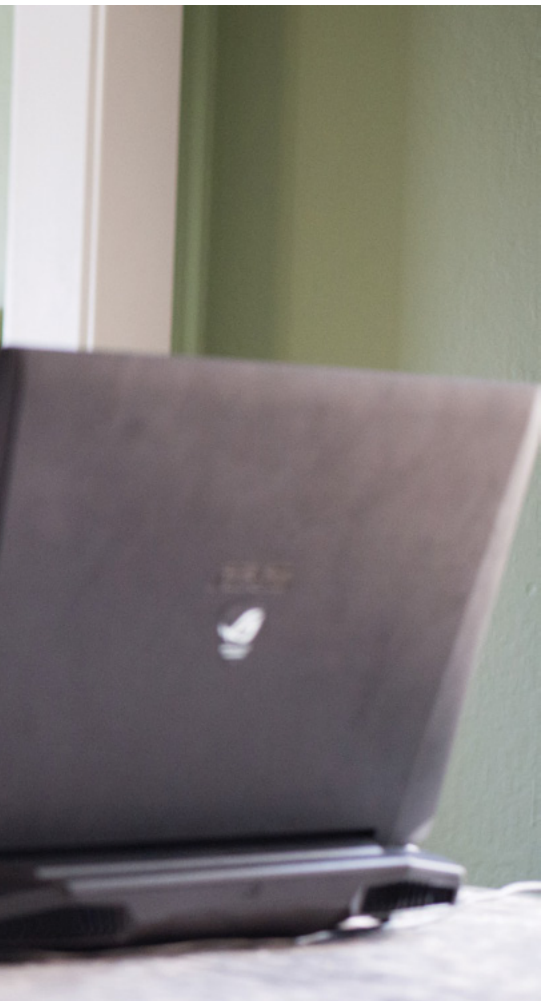
Johnson's high school coach Santiago was disappointed at first too. "It was tough, because I think he could have gone and played overseas and made a good living," Santiago says.

At the time Johnson picked nursing over basketball, Dellinger was pregnant with their second son Knox. "A lot of people were giving her grief," Johnson says.

There was a question of whether Johnson gave up basketball because of pressure from his partner. "I'm sure a lot of people still do think that… because I did get pregnant again," Dellinger says, referring to their second son Knox who was born this past October.

"I did. We did," Johnson interjects.

"Well, I was the one who was pregnant. But I was OK with him going to Davis if he wanted to go," Dellinger says.



Had he played for UC Davis and then gone on to play professionally, Johnson would likely have learned that getting paid to play basketball is a rare privilege that comes with enormous perks and a wide array of challenges. According to the World Atlas website, out of 825 million people in the world who play basketball, only 400 will make it to the NBA. Given the limited roster space in the NBA, many elite players are forced to take their talents overseas to play professionally. And an athlete's earning potential is tied directly to their physical health, which is put at risk every time they step onto the court.

"This is a very nomadic business. You have to be prepared to pack up and move at any time. It can be for a variety of reasons: for a better contract offer, a team's financial issues, whatever," says professional overseas player Michael Creppy, featured in a 2018 article on sports news website The Undefeated.

The instability would be tough for young parents like Johnson and Dellinger — nursing offered a much more stable and sustainable career.

"Malcolm knew that his career was probably going to end at Davis, and with two young kids, the sooner he could have paychecks coming in the better. It speaks to what a mature person he is," City College coach Labagh says.

> "When you have a son as kind, and caring, and wonderful as Malcolm, you support him."
>
> – Michael Johnson

Johnson's father quickly came around and threw his full support behind his son. "When you have a son as kind, and caring, and wonderful as Malcolm, you support him. I love all my kids, but Malcolm is the total package," he says.

Johnson is unfazed by fatherhood, even though he was only 21 when his first son Nash was born. He knew if he put himself in a position to be successful, things would work out. He is grateful for Dellinger and their sons.

After his second son Knox was born in October, he reflects on how it feels to be a father again: "I don't feel any different. There's just another person in this world that I love unconditionally." After all, family and close friends are what Johnson thrives on.

When it comes to parenting, he takes lessons from his parents' playbook. He wants his children to be as comfortable confiding in him as he is with his parents.

"If I was doing something questionable, it wouldn't be a whooping or anything, it would be a conversation," Johnson says of his childhood.

He has always been a good student, but Johnson attributes his academic success to his work ethic — the same ethic that made him a good athlete.

In addition to nursing school, he is in the early stages of developing a social media app with former high school and City College teammate Alec Check, but Johnson is tight-lipped about their venture.

In five years, Johnson hopes not only to be done with school, saying "Worst case scenario, both myself and Lauren will be nurses… Best case scenario, this app thing works out and I'm a millionaire."

In the living room of their Fairfield home, Johnson sits on the couch with his father and Dellinger, admiring their babbling 1-year-old and peaceful newborn, medals and relics from his basketball past packed away in the inaccessible recesses of the attic.

Johnson and his father banter about who is the better athlete. His father needles him, "He knew he would never be as good as his dad. He couldn't shake and bake like me!"

After some more back and forth, Michael Johnson heads out to pick up groceries.

"Buh-by!" coos Nash to his grandpa from his father's lap.

Malcolm Johnson, right, follows his son Nash Johnson as he tries to open the door. (Janeth R. Sanchez/Etc Magazine)

Miguel Navarro, who goes by Fego, left, congratulates Abdiel de la Paz, who goes by AB, center, while listening to the judges' feedback at a local music contest hosted by Bayview LIVE 2019. AB, as a winner, got the opportunity to open for rapper Busta Rhymes a few weeks later. (Lauren Walker-López/Etc Magazine)

PLAYING IT FORWARD

Alum mentors young adults at Sunset Youth Services

Story by Lauren Walker-López

Rymo Cortado, a creative lead at Sunset Youth Services, lays down beats on the keyboard for a new track called "Finding Peace." (Emily Huston/Etc Magazine)

In a small studio near the foggiest edge of San Francisco, Miguel Navarro, a former City College of San Francisco student, mixes vocals and beats inside a cramped recording booth just above the main floor of Sunset Youth Services. Navarro, who prefers his artist name Fego (pronounced "fi-go"), mentors aspiring young artists — but at 29-years-old, he is hardly older than his mentees.

Fego mentors adolescents who want to take their music to the next level. He is one of the creative leads in the digital arts department at Sunset Youth Services, SYS, a nonprofit focused on helping at-risk 14- to 24-year-olds.

An at-risk youth is defined as "a child who is less likely to transition successfully into adulthood" because of exposure to factors like unemployment, poverty, addiction, violence, mental health issues, abuse or neglect, according to the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs website.

Fego understands from personal experience the vital role mentors can play in a young person's life, and has chosen to pay it forward for all the support he received when he was growing up. To him, a mentor is "a big brother who is there to help tackle different things I'm going through. To this day, I'll reach out to mine if there's something I'm dealing with."

Studies have shown that mentorship can lead to better quality of life for at-risk youth. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service government website, "76% of at-risk young adults who had a mentor aspire to enroll in and graduate from college versus half of at-risk young adults who had no mentor."

SYS's mission is to create healthy and trusting relationships in order to promote real change in the lives of San Francisco youth.

In the role of mentor, Fego helps the young people he works with write, record and edit, but he does more than teach them about music. Sometimes it's a challenge to guide the participants while building relationships.

"Kids are dealing with different traumas… opening up can be tough," Fego says, but art and music help. "It's where the conversation begins."

In the cramped recording studio, Fego works with Abdiel "AB" de la Paz, 18, a first-year student at City College; and Sarah "Lexis" Eker, 15, a high school student at Ruth Asawa School of the Arts. With just enough space for a few people, they squeeze in to improvise a new song.

At the mic, AB feels awkward as he tries to rap. He explains it's a new style for him. "It's still fun though," he says.

He is encouraged by his mentor. "Fego tells me, 'It's hard to jump into a new thing. You're a dope singer, and you're a dope rapper. When you're jumping to something else, like from singing to rapping, you're growing and challenging yourself as an artist. And that's a good thing,'" AB says.

The digital arts and technology program at SYS has their own record label, Upstar Records. Creating music provides a therapeutic outlet for the participants who struggle with issues including childhood trauma, school suspension, expulsion and even incarceration.

Fego leads by example. He challenges himself in front of them by singing rather than rapping in his familiar style. Trying new things is a part of Fego's process. It's something his mentors taught him.

Having grown up in the Mission District, Fego can relate to the challenges his mentees face. The reality of gang violence was never very far. At 9-years-old, he associated flowers with death because they were on the many streetside memorials in his neighborhood. "I was like 'Oh crap, that's another person,'" Fego says. It was a constant reminder "that you could be next if you're not careful."

Throughout his own adolescence, Fego was involved in the creative arts. He says they saved his life. He took drama classes at the Brava Theater and went to the DJ Project at Horizons Unlimited Inc., an artist development program where youth are taught music skills and encouraged to create music with a positive message. Both programs, located in the Mission District, were safe havens with no gang affiliation.

While these programs offered Fego protection, he still had to be vigilant. If he wore too much red in public, he worried about being perceived as affiliated with a gang. "I was like, 'Oh crap, I gotta go home and change,'" he says. At the DJ Project, youth mentor Arsenio Hernandez first noticed Fego and took him under his wing. To Hernandez, Fego stood out because of his animated quick wit and individual style.

> "Growing up, I wasn't really around... positive influences. And Fego is full of positivity."
>
> – Rogee

"It's easy to get lost and swept into the group mentality, and Fego has always been able to pull (inspiration) from different groups, and then refine it for who Fego is."

Hernandez explains that to be a good mentor is to listen and not make assumptions, saying "Often we try to say what's right or wrong for someone without having a true understanding of where they're coming from."

After high school, Fego remained with the DJ project and enrolled at City College, "just to have some order in my life." He wasn't aiming for a certificate, degree or transfer credits. "I just went in there and took classes that I enjoyed," he says.

He studied everything from film and acting, to sociology and child development. One class, called Poetry for the People, taught by Interdisciplinary Studies Department Chair Lauren Muller, left a profound impression on him.

"It was one of the first times I felt like I was heard... I don't even know if she (Muller) knows how much that impacted me… but I remember her saying, 'Hey, I really like your poem, I really want to publish it,'" Fego recalls.

Though the poem was never published, Fego discovered the power of words. "I couldn't hide behind the music," he learned from Muller.

Muller understands the importance of building a relationship with a mentor and says it's "a skill they (students) can use anywhere."

After attending City College, Fego worked at various nonprofits and high schools around the city as a program coordinator. He was hired at SYS full-time this past June.

One afternoon, a Mission High School student named

Rogelio Campos Garcia, who goes by Rogee, writes a song he calls "Lack of Love" at Sunset Youth Services. Rogee was still in high school when he met Fego. (Amal Ben Ghanem/Etc Magazine)

AB competes in a local music contest hosted by Bayview LIVE 2019 in the Bayview District of San Francisco. (Lauren Walker-López/Etc Magazine)

Rogee, right, poses with Fego after approaching him on the bus. Rogee admired Fego's work, but he had no idea at the time that they would one day collaborate. (Photo courtesy of Rogee)

Rogelio Campos Garcia — formerly known by his artist name as Allmothug, but who now prefers Rogee — was riding the 33 Ashbury bus line and recognized Fego from his music video that has received over 3,000 views. To Rogee, Fego was famous. Although Rogee tried to keep his cool, Fego recalls how excited Rogee seemed. After getting off the bus, Rogee asked Fego if they could pose for a photo together. Fego obliged, and they went their separate ways for a couple years.

In high school, Rogee would sit with his friend Esly Juarez and write rap lyrics. When they heard about an opportunity to record their music for free in the recording booth at SYS, they jumped at the chance.

After graduating, Rogee enrolled at City College to explore different degree options. He says his college schedule offers him more flexibility, allowing for time to create music in the studio at SYS with mentors like Fego.

It is surreal and an honor for Rogee to work with Fego, an artist he has admired for so long. "Growing up, I wasn't really around… positive influences. And he's full of positivity," he says.

Rogee launched his first record "Still Coastin'" this past July. He describes it as West Coast rap with vulnerable undertones. The last song on the album, "82290," which refers to his brother's birthday, is a dialogue between Rogee and his late brother who at 15, fell victim to gang violence. Like Fego's music, Rogee's too has struck a chord in his community and abroad,

> A mentor is "a big brother who is there to help tackle different things I'm going through. To this day I'll reach out to mine if there's something I'm dealing with."
>
> – Fego

selling records in Japan and France.

Giggles spill out of the sound booth as Fego, AB and Lexis fumble the lyrics they wrote down moments before recording. After they calm down, they discuss their plan and record a new take. Bit by bit they build the hook, intro and first verse of the song.

Having a father as a minister meant AB grew up on gospel music and that his family moved around a bit. He landed at Ida B. Wells High School in San Francisco for his senior year, where he first heard about SYS and Upstar Records from an outreach presentation during lunch period.

He wanted access to a studio to learn how to record music. He started using the mobile recording booth SYS would bring to campus every Wednesday. After recording with them for a couple months, AB learned that the booth would no longer be coming to his school. To continue recording music, AB took a job opportunity at SYS.

As he gained experience as a songwriter and beat maker, AB grew in confidence and began to record his own original music again.

In the recording booth, Fego took AB under his wing and they began to collaborate. Through the encouragement he finds at SYS, AB has overcome some of his insecurities and found great success. AB won a contest in early October to open for Grammy-decorated artist Busta Rhymes, and will release his first EP in 2020.

The trusting relationships Fego has cultivated with AB, Rogee, Lexis and others provide a stable space for these young musicians to aspire for more in life. Mentors like Fego model how success and growth is possible, even when up against tough odds.

"He's always there, aside from music, and he's always been a very caring person," AB says of Fego.

Rogee adds, "He tells me, 'You got this… believe in yourself.'"

PSYCHEDELIC THERAPY

Recently decriminalized drugs find new life in mental health treatment

Story by Daniel Murphy
Photos by Janeth R. Sanchez

James McConchie uncovers a treasure trove of oyster mushrooms in Golden Gate Park. While leaning on a well-worn, makeshift walking stick fashioned from an old broom handle, he exclaims "Oh, great score!"

The late summer sun beats down on McConchie's utilitarian bucket hat, adorned with various mushroom-related Bay Area organization buttons. The former City College of San Francisco student flashes a broad smile and hands an oyster mushroom to a student in his mycology class. McConchie's elation for fungi can't be contained. He feels indebted to these mysterious organisms for helping his family through his wife's battle with cancer and his own struggle with depression.

Entheogenic plants have been utilized for thousands of years by indigenous cultures around the world. Yet recent research at various academic institutions has revealed modern therapeutic potential for their psychoactive properties. "The risks seem to be minimal but the potential benefits are high," says Karen Hu, professor of biological psychology at City College.

The term "entheogenic" refers to a class of psychedelic drugs used to induce a spiritual experience by the user. Entheogens have historically been used and are still used today by various religions, including the Oumami in South America, the Native Americans of the Southwest U.S. and the Bwiti tribe in West Africa.

The most commonly known entheogens are: psilocybin, frequently referred to as "magic mushrooms;" ayahuasca; lophophora williamsii, commonly known as peyote; and iboga.

Although most scientific research is still premature, some swear by psilocybin as an effective tool for treating depression and anxiety, while others have found ayahuasca and iboga particularly beneficial in treating addiction.

On the heels of the legalization of the recreational use of marijauna in California through Proposition 64, which passed in 2016, Oakland City Council voted to decriminalize entheogenic plant-based psychedelics in June 2019. These drugs are still considered controlled and scheduled substances by the DEA.

This means that if an individual has a plant-based psychedelic on hand, they can use it within the city limits of Oakland, but obtaining it is a different story.

On a recent October afternoon, James McConchie slides open a creaky gate outside a Victorian building, revealing an eclectic art studio where his wife, Melinda McConchie, retails her art and fashion samples. The couple, who met in 2008 at a City College fashion class, have been married for seven years and have a 5-year-old son.

On the opposite side of the studio, James McConchie runs the Haight Street Shroom Shop. Behind a draped tapestry, he reveals a gourmet mushroom growing lab.

In his mycology class, students learn to cultivate edible, gourmet and medicinal mushrooms. James McConchie states an important disclaimer at the start of every class: his shop does not "demonstrate or encourage the cultivation, supply or use of psilocybin mushrooms."

When Melinda McConchie was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2014, an old friend suggested James McConchie read up on the work of author and mycologist Paul Stamets, well known as the TED Talk mushroom guy.

In his first TED Talk, Stamets reveals how his mother's breast cancer was cured through the aid of turkey tail mushrooms, which are purported to possess immune system-boosting and anticarcinogenic effects on the human body. Coincidentally, Melinda McConchie was diagnosed with the same type of breast cancer that Stamets' mother beat.

To increase Melinda McConchie's chances of surviving stage two breast cancer, and because she was under the age of 40, "they gave her ultra-aggressive therapy," James says, which generally causes severe side effects. The following months were some of the most difficult for the McConchie family.

Melinda McConchie began taking

Trametes versicolor, top, left and bottom, known as turkey tail mushrooms, have medicinal compounds that benefit the immune system. Psilocybe cubensis, right, known as magic mushrooms, can be used to trigger hallucinogenic experiences.

turkey tail mushrooms, and according to James McConchie, she "went through the treatment relatively unscathed."

Turkey tail mushrooms are not psychedelic, nor are they regulated by the FDA. They are approved as a "nutraceutical," an alternative to pharmaceutical treatments.

"You're making this personal recipe with all of these different supplements. You can use certain mushrooms to create a health-centered approach towards your life," James McConchie says.

Melinda McConchie made it through treatment, but she and her husband weren't out of the woods yet. The recovery period after treatment is always uncertain, and there is always a possibility the cancer will return.

The pressures of early fatherhood, a hellish rush-hour commute to Fremont and a wife recovering from breast cancer sent James McConchie spiraling into depression. He came across studies from Johns Hopkins University on psilocybin microdosing in individuals with depression.

A common strategy with psilocybin is to microdose by taking doses under a gram. These minute amounts of psilocybin can improve mood and creativity without a full psychedelic visual trip. Within three months of microdosing, James McConchie felt he was able to identify "what was going on internally." His newfound clarity helped him move beyond the depression and demons that came with the uncertainty of his wife's battle with cancer.

"After the psilocybin experience, patients find that there is an increase in openness to experiences," Hu says.

As James McConchie's knowledge blossomed, so did his passion for growing mushrooms. He wanted to share the art of fungus cultivation with his community. It's been two years since the McConchies opened their small combined art gallery and retail mushroom business. The storefront is located on Hayes Street, just blocks from the epicenter of the 1960s psychedelic counterculture movement that is Haight-Ashbury.

Just as psilocybin helped James McConchie with depression, ayahuasca helped Todd Youngs with addiction.

His story sounds all too familiar: sporadic recreational drug use

James McConchie listens to a question about mushroom growth during his Mycology 101 workshop.

turned a dark corner and Youngs fell into addiction in 1984, around the height of the cocaine epidemic.

He tried cocaine for the first time at 17. "I discovered right away that even just using it intranasally, I liked coke," Youngs says, pausing then adding, "maybe a little too much."

> "Ultimately the problem with me is not that I was a depressed person, but that I was an addicted person."
>
> – Todd Youngs

Youngs' pleasure-seeking habits led him to alcohol abuse and eventually heroine addiction. "I went to jail at least a dozen times," he says.

Two decades later, Youngs found himself back in southern Missouri living in his mother's basement, under court supervision and unable to do what he considered meaningful work. "I called myself an unemployable headcase," Youngs says. He was in his late 30s and still addicted to opiates. "Emotionally, I was a wreck," he says.

"Ultimately the problem with me was not that I was a depressed person, but that I was an addicted person," Youngs concludes.

He spent four years feeling "utterly helpless and hopeless" and was arrested again in 2008 on drug charges. When he was released five months later, someone suggested he try the psychedelic ayahuasca to help with his addiction.

Ayahuasca is made from the vine of the Banisteriopsis caapi plant, which typically grows natively in Central and South America. Indigenous cultures who reside in the Amazon basin have been using ayahuasca as part of their spiritual rituals for thousands of years.

"Ayahuasca ceremonies started in Peru and were indigenous to that region," says Natalie Cox, an anthropology professor at City College. The vines used to brew ayahuasca became a coveted commodity by indigenous tribes such as the Oumami, who would trade for it. "It's generally associated with a coming-of-age ritual… it's a way of becoming a man in that society," Cox adds.

The caapi root can be macerated and boiled down into a drinkable brew. In traditional indigenous cultures, a shaman prepares and administers the brew, guiding participants through an experience that lasts for hours.

"There are no records of these rituals per se, beyond the oral history of the shamans who were practicing them," Cox says.

Today, ayahuasca retreat centers can be found throughout Central and South America, and even in southwestern states in the U.S. These modern-day versions typically involve a trained leader who can prepare the brew and lead participants through the psychedelic journey.

James McConchie, right, kisses his wife Melinda McConchie, left, who underwent aggressive chemotherapy. She took turkey tail mushrooms to help relieve the side effects of her cancer treatment.

Typically, there is a "purging" after consuming the brew, which is common with iboga as well. Participants may vomit or experience severe bowel movements, but the shaman is close by for support. In more traditional ceremonies, the shaman may sing songs dubbed "icaros," meant to enhance some of the visual effects of ayahuasca.

Shortly after learning of the healing potential of ayahuasca, Youngs travelled to New Mexico to participate in his first ceremony.

"My first experience was not overwhelming… but something started happening, some knots started getting untangled deep inside of me. I was having thoughts of things I hadn't thought about in twenty years," Youngs says.

"That first ceremony planted a seed," he says, but then, "like any good alcoholic, I went back home to Missouri, promptly started drinking again and drank myself into jail three-and-a-half months later."

While he detoxed miserably in the drunk tank, he kept coming back to his psychedelic experience. He describes becoming in tune with a voice.

Three weeks after his arrest and forced detox in the holding cell, Youngs began his journey towards sobriety. He enrolled in a 12-step program, but made a point to self-medicate with ayahuasca as additional therapy.

In a six-month period, he took ayahuasca 18 times. "I got a sponsor, I went to meetings, I read the books, I did it all. Those ceremonies I was having for myself were literally informing me and explaining the program to me," Youngs says.

Addicts like Youngs may be on and off opioid treatment drugs like methadone and suboxone while trying to break their addictions.

"I was on methadone five different times over a period of 20 years," says Youngs, referring to the period of his life before he discovered ayahuasca.

These drugs block the high of opiates, but they too can be "super, super addictive," according to Eric Lewis, the associate director of the addiction and recovery program at City College that focuses on harm reduction counseling for addicts.

"Most of the people out there in treatment all started with prescription drugs," Lewis says.

"Many get hooked pretty quickly."

A number of San Francisco clinics often administer opioid-addiction treatment drugs in tandem with harm-reduction counseling.

By taking the entheogen iboga, activist Chor Boogie quit heroin with the help of his wife Elizabeth Bast. They both feel that the healthcare system may be omitting these therapeutic plants not from lack of scientific evidence, but for profit. Boogie says the western medicine approach to addiction doesn't "want to cure anybody. It's not harm reduction, it's harmful."

Lewis concedes most methadone clinics in San Francisco are for profit, but methadone can help addicts "get their lives back."

The twisted greed of our healthcare system appears to be profiting from an opiate crisis from initial prescription to prescribed opiate-addiction treatment medication — something psychedelics could potentially alleviate.

For Youngs, methadone was not a solution. "It creates an emotional flatlining; there are no highs and no lows," he says. Ayahuasca aids in a forced introspection of an individual's insecurities and emotions which may lead an addict to more easily open up in therapy.

Through his use of ayahuasca, Youngs discovered he was holding on to some grief he had not processed, saying "Sometimes it can be kind of painful. It shows you stuff you may not want to see." When it comes to helping addicts, Youngs believes "non-habit-forming drugs like ayahuasca should be explored." He's been sober for 10 years now.

After supplementing traditional treatment with turkey tail mushrooms, Melinda McConchie has been cancer free for two years and the passion that James McConchie has for mushrooms runs deeper than just his desire to teach. Since his psilocybin microdosing regimen, "I just don't find myself going into the repetitive cycles of depression that I used to," he says.

As support garners for entheogens in the Bay Area, these ancient organisms will continue to provide solutions to shortcomings in modern medicine.

Above: Last summer, the city of Oakland voted to decriminalize entheogenic plants like psilocybin mushrooms. When consumed in micro-doses they have the potential to treat depression and anxiety.

SPRING 2020 JOURNALISM CLASSES

Classes start January 13, 2020. To register for courses go to www.ccsfjournalism.com
For more information call (415) 239–3446.

Jour 19: Contemporary News Media — 3.0 units

31193 001 **Lec.** **T R** **09:40 – 10:55 a.m.** **HC 215** **Gonzales**

Introduction to modern mass communication, with an emphasis on development of news media, analysis of the credibility of the media and its impact on daily life. *CSU/UC*

Jour 21: News Writing and Reporting — 3.0 units

31194 001 **Lec.** **T R** **11:10 – 12:55 p.m.** **HC 215** **Gonzales**

Techniques of newspaper reporting, developing and writing a news story, training in information gathering and interviewing sources.
PREREQ.: ENGL 93 or ENGL 95 or ENGL 88 or ENGL 88A or placement in ENGL 96 or ENGL 88B

Jour 22: Feature Writing — 3.0 units

31195 551 **Lec.** **T** **6:30 – 9:20 p.m.** **Mission Center/Rm. 217** **Gonzales**

Fundamentals in feature writing for magazines and newspapers with special emphasis on profile and interpretive news features. Practical experience in interview and in-depth research techniques. Training in how to write a freelance story for publication.
PREREQ.: ENGL 93 or ENGL 95 or ENGL 88 or ENGL 88A or placement in ENGL 96 or ENGL 88B

Jour 25: Editorial Management — 3.0 units

32474 001 **Lec.** **M W F** **12:10 – 1:00 p.m.** **BNGL 615** **Gonzales**

An advanced journalism course that trains prospective print editors on all aspects of operating a publication, including developing a publishing schedule and story assignments, coordinating a writing staff, designing a page, writing headlines and cutlines, sizing photographs, understanding the business side of print journalism, and working with other editors and printers. *COREQ.: JOUR 24 CSU*

Jour 29A: Intro Magazine Editing & Production — 3.0 units

32328 551 **L/L** **M** **6:30 – 8:20 p.m.** **Mission Center/Rm. 217** **Lifland**

An introduction to the process of creating a magazine publication. Students work as part of a staff of writers and photographers, focusing on writing and photographing feature stories suitable for publication in the campus magazine.
ADVISE: JOUR 21 or JOUR 22 or JOUR 37

Jour 29B: Intermediate Magazine Editing & Production — 3.0 units

32723 551 **L/L** **M** **6:30 – 8:20 p.m.** **Mission Center/Rm. 217** **Lifland**

An intermediate exploration into the process of creating a magazine publication. Students work as editors focusing on editing content suitable for publication in the campus magazine. They participate in the editorial and production process and develop the skills required for publishing a campus magazine.
ADVISE: JOUR 29A

Jour 29C: Advanced Magazine Editing & Production — 3.0 units

32724 551 **L/L** **M** **6:30 – 8:20 p.m.** **Mission Center/Rm. 217** **Lifland**

An advanced exploration into the process of creating a magazine publication. Students work in management positions focusing on leading a staff in producing content suitable for publication in the campus magazine. They facilitate the editorial and production process and develope the skills required to manage the publication of a campus magazine. *ADVISE: JOUR 29B*

Jour 31: Internship Experience — 2.0 units

31196 001 **Exp** **HOURS ARR** **BNGL 615** **Gonzales**

Supervised on-campus or off-campus employment in a branch of journalism or a closely allied field.
ADVISE.: JOUR 24, Repeat: Maximum credit: 4 units

Jour 36: Investigative Reporting — 3.0 units

31820 351 **Lec** **R** **6:30 – 9:20 p.m.** **Mission Center/Rm. 217** **Gonzales**

The course provides advanced concepts of news gathering, interviewing and writing. Students will be assigned beats covering neighborhood communities and local government. *ADVISE.: JOUR 21*

Jour 37: Intro to Photojournalism — 3.0 units

30790 551 **Lec.** **W** **6:30 - 9:20 p.m.** **Mission Cenrter/Rm. 217** **Lifland**

Emphasizes concepts of photojournalism such as news and feature photography. Assignments will involve photographing people and visual storytelling at a level appropriate for publication such as in campus publications. Access to Single Lens Reflex (SLR) digital or film camera required.
ADVISE: PHOT 51 or demonstration of equivalent knowledge. CSU

ALL HANDS ON DECK!

Journalism 29

MAGAZINE EDITING AND PRODUCTION

Monday 6:30–8:30

FALL AND SPRING SEMESTERS

For more information call 415·239·3446

etc
magazine